POLARIS

The Story of an Eskimo Dog

ERNEST HAROLD BAYNES

$19.95
616A

Hope A. Levy Memorial Library

1721 S. Mason Rd.
Saint Louis, MO 63131

Recvd 1947

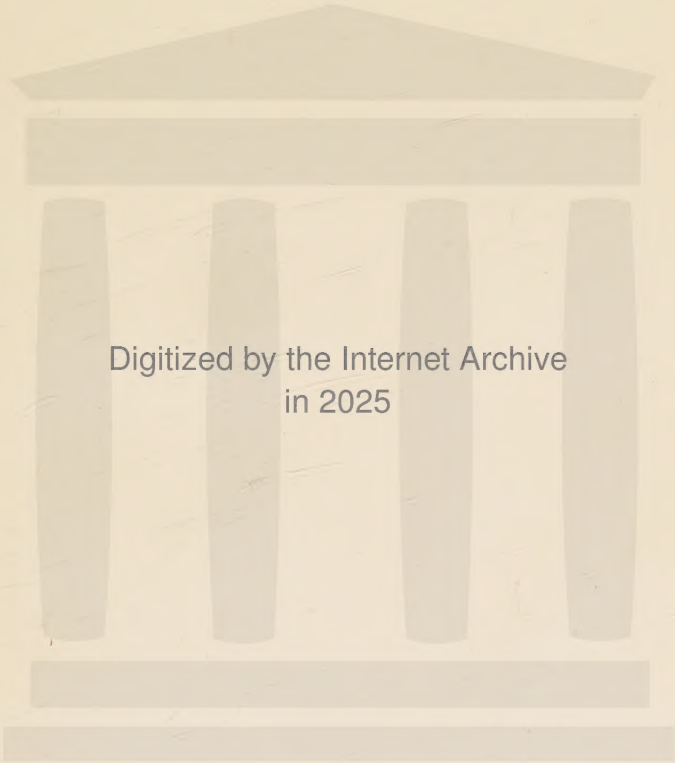
POLARIS

The Story of an Eskimo Dog

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
NEW YORK · BOSTON · CHICAGO · DALLAS
ATLANTA · SAN FRANCISCO

MACMILLAN & CO., LIMITED
LONDON · BOMBAY · CALCUTTA
MELBOURNE

THE MACMILLAN CO. OF CANADA, LTD.
TORONTO


Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/polarisstoryofes0000erne

Polaris Fishing in Blow-Me-Down Brook

POLARIS

The Story of an Eskimo Dog

BY

ERNEST HAROLD BAYNES

AUTHOR OF "WILD BIRD GUESTS," ETC.

With many Illustrations from Photographs by

LOUISE BIRT BAYNES, JOHN R. BAYNES,
AND THE AUTHOR

New York

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1922

All rights reserved

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

COPYRIGHT, 1922,
BY THE MACMILLAN COMPANY.

Set up and printed. Published October, 1922.

Press of
J. J. Little & Ives Company
New York, U. S. A.

This little volume is dedicated to
my very good friend
DR. TOWNSEND W. THORNDIKE
whose keen interest in everything even remotely pertaining to the Arctic led him to suggest that I write the biography of our mutual friend, Polaris the Glorious.

PREFACE

EVERY incident described in this life of Polaris actually took place, and almost every one is recounted exactly as it occurred. In one or two instances, as in that of the chasing of the rooster in the churchyard, the author has given the actual facts, but has shaded them a little to improve the story. Even in such cases, he has stated nothing impossible or even improbable, and mentions the matter only because he desires to keep absolute faith with the reader. He has carefully avoided reading into the actions of Polaris evidence of human intelligence. Dogs do not possess such intelligence, and their behavior is perhaps all the more wonderful because they do not. They possess canine intelligence, and this often serves them better, probably, than would our own. They have keener hearing than we have and infinitely keener scent. Most of them are swifter of foot, better able to protect themselves unarmed and

weight for weight, and when confronted by certain problems within the range of either their individual or tribal experience, their minds and bodies act more quickly and unerringly than those of any man.

Writers who cater to the over-sentimental by attributing to dogs, cats, and other animals thoughts and actions possible only for human beings, are doing many of their readers a very grave injury. They are not only teaching false natural history, which is bad enough in itself, but they are creating and fostering among unthinking people an unhealthy sentimentality which often leads eventually to zoöphil psychosis, a form of mental disease in which the patients' love of animals becomes distorted, if not absolutely dangerous to those around them. Sick cats give more concern than sick children; the welfare of a guinea pig is of more consequence than that of many babies. It is the author's belief that the reader and the publisher should demand from those who write about animals either the truth or a label to inform the purchaser that he is buying fiction. The author is in hearty sympathy with those who write

charming fairy tales in which animals play their parts as only fairy-tale animals can, but he has no sympathy with those who either through ignorance or cupidity, or both, endow their characters with human reason and present them as animals they have actually seen on their hearthstones or studied in the fields and woods. There is a movement now on foot for sane humane education. Let us love and be kind to animals for what they really are—many of them are worthy of all we can do for them—but in the name of sanity and real humanity, let us avoid that morbid condition of mind in which animals appear to be more intelligent and of greater consequence than our fellow men.

ERNEST HAROLD BAYNES.

Meriden, New Hampshire,
June 10, 1922.

INTRODUCTION

In this book my friend Mr. Baynes has, with consummate skill, depicted truthfully and dramatically the life of his dog Polaris, a wonderful specimen of a breed little known except to those who have lived in the Arctic.

Two hundred and forty-seven dogs left the *Roosevelt* in the spring of 1909, and Polaris's parents, Sipsu and Acutah, were two of the forty-five selected to drag the loaded sledges, under the worst possible ice conditions, on the final stretch of the long trip. They were both staunch, powerful dogs; I had worked with them for weeks and knew them well. And at length, on April 6, 1909, the indomitable Peary, with his faithful Eskimo dog drivers and Polaris's forbears, placed "Old Glory" at the North Pole.

Very little has been written in song or story of this wolfish "Ultima Thule" breed of dogs, for only Admiral Peary has used them; and he saw mostly the unfriendly side, for with him it was "Go! Go!" Mr. Baynes has a knowledge

and love of animals possessed by few. He watched Polaris grow up from a little puppy, and saw him in all his moods. He is, therefore, to my mind the very person to write this story.

I shall not forget the night of the Thorndike dinner. I had no idea of what was going to be pulled off, and just before I began telling my story, in bounded Polaris. He did look glorious. His long, snowy white hair looked as if he had come from a long trip over the trackless Arctic Sahara. His tongue was lolling, teeth snow white, gums red, ears erect, and tail coiled hard upon his back. These characteristics represent the A-one test of Arctic dog powers. Truly it made my blood tingle, and brought back joyfully the Great Days spent with my beloved and noble Peary.

It is a great honor to write this introduction, and I earnestly hope that glorious Polaris in book form will adorn the bookshelves of many homes—especially the homes in which there are girls and boys.

R. A. BARTLETT.*

U. S. A. T. Eldena
Honolulu, T. H.
June 30, 1922

* Captain Robert A. Bartlett, who sailed the *Roosevelt* for Peary and the *Karluk* for Stefansson.

CONTENTS

PAGE

PART I

Early Days 1

PART II

In the Pride of His Strength 52

PART III

Various Adventures 102

POLARIS

The Story of an Eskimo Dog

POLARIS, THE STORY OF AN ESKIMO DOG

PART I

EARLY DAYS

"THE finest Eskimo dog in the world" was what Captain "Bob" Bartlett called him, and if any man should have known, it was Captain "Bob."

The first time I saw Polaris was in the spring of 1914. I was spending the day with Admiral Peary at Eagle Island in Casco Bay, and he took me over to Flag Island in a motor launch to see some of the dogs which had drawn his sledges to the Pole. They bred on this island and I was to have a puppy if we could find any.

The dogs found shelter in the dense, low-growing bushes which covered part of the island, and earned about half their living by capturing crabs and other marine creatures

while wandering along the shore. The other half of their food was carried to them in the motor launch every two or three days. Very rarely they took a holiday by swimming through the strong tide to South Harpswell, and the first news of their activities to reach Eagle Island would usually come in the form of a large bill for poultry.

As the launch dropped anchor and as we stepped into the rowboat and approached the sloping beach, we saw a number of light-gray wolfish dogs sauntering down to meet us. When we landed they gathered about us, smiling reservedly and wagging rather stiffly their tightly curled tails. They were quite friendly, but not demonstrative. Then they accompanied us in our walk over the island, some ranging out in front, others marching close beside us. Still others were to be seen in the distance, and whenever they lowered their tails, as they frequently did, I was struck by their close resemblance to gray wolves.

We had crossed the little island and were returning by a different route, when from a particularly thick clump of bushes, a thin bitch

His Absurd Little Tail Was Curled Over His Back Like the Handle of a Tea Cup

with a kindly face drew herself, stretching and yawning, almost to our feet. It was Acutah, one of the discoverers of the North Pole.

"Ha! Acutah, you rascal," cried Peary, patting the lean gray head, "what have you got in there—puppies?"

His guess was correct, for a moment later we found, lying in a nest of leaves, four of the loveliest woolly white pups which I have ever seen. We brought them out and set them on the grass to get a good look at them, and Admiral Peary said that I might have my choice.

I looked them over very carefully, these high-born princes of the North; it might be my only chance to make a close-range study of an Eskimo dog, and I wanted a good one. Two of them were marked with the darkish gray saddle, the type which Peary preferred; it must be one of these. There was little to choose between them, but presently one lay down, and the other toddled over to where I crouched on the ground, watching them. His absurd little tail was curled over his hip like the handle of a teacup, and there was a cherubic smile lighting the baby face. He stood on his hind legs, put his fore-

paws on my arm, and as I bent my head down to him he stuck his wet noselet into my ear and began to lick frantically.

"Want to go with me, little thing?"I said very softly, and at the sound of my voice close to him, his moist roseleaf of a tongue fairly whirled in my ear.

There was no doubt now as to which pup I should take. I had not exactly chosen this one, but he had chosen me, and perhaps that was all the better.

When we left Flag Island many of the dogs followed us down to the beach, and the last I saw of Acutah she was standing to her middle in the water, her anxious eyes fixed on the motor boat which was carrying away her little one forever.

That night about one o'clock I rang the door-bell of my friend K—— in Newton Center. I rang it several times, in fact, before K—— himself switched on the light and came downstairs vowing vengeance on whoever had dared to wake him at that unsaintly hour. He opened the door aggressively, and in walked—not the culprit human he expected to "talk to," but—

the most beautiful, dignified, self-possessed little gentleman of a dog he had ever seen in his life. The bright sarcastic words he had prepared for me died on his lips, and the affected look of

Eagle Island from Flag Island

anger was replaced by a kindly grin as he remarked, "Well, old man, that pup is all that saved your life. Isn't he a peach? Where *did* you get him?"

The puppy walked slowly around the room, giving his close attention to each new object as

he came to it, and finally on reaching a great musk-ox rug he curled up in the middle of it and went fast asleep.

Next day the little Arctic stranger was the guest of the K——s, and had he been an old family dog he could hardly have made himself more at home. He swung in the hammock with the children, went for a drive on the front seat of the automobile, and after gravely eying a Teddy bear to which he was introduced, he attacked it with all his infant might and scattered its stuffing to the winds of Newton Center.

We named him "Polaris" the very day he arrived at "Sunset Ridge," our home on the mountainside near Meriden, New Hampshire. And his name is still spoken and will be spoken for years to come by the country folk for miles around. Most of them speak it with love, a few with fear, and all, I think, with great respect.

And he had scarcely reached "Sunset Ridge" before he made the acquaintance of two of our other dogs, Beowulf and Heatherbloom. Beowulf was a slashing Great Dane, about the size and color of a Jersey bull calf, who had a voice which shook the plaster off the ceiling and a

Beowulf and Heatherbloom

tout ensemble which put the fear of God into every undesirable citizen within the radius of a long walk. Heatherbloom was a young Scottish terrier whose single year of life had been devoted chiefly to teasing Beowulf, and who was about as restful as a perambulating buzz saw.

Up to this time the two had been almost inseparable friends. Beowulf, for all his size and dignity, thoroughly enjoyed the companionship of the waspish little terrier, and when she had chewed his ears until he could stand it no longer, he would gently shake her off and walk away. As for Heatherbloom, she adored the Dane, and if there is such a thing as hero worship among dogs, I'm sure he was a hero to her. Beowulf was a magnificent jumper, and I doubt if the little Scottie ever had prouder moments than those in which I lifted her in my arms that she might get a better view of her big pal as he came sailing over some high gate or fence.

Of course we were greatly interested to see what would happen when they saw the stranger. The Dane and the Scottie were playing on the lawn when he arrived, and with absolute fearlessness he walked straight over to the larger

dog. Beowulf pricked his ears, drew himself to his full height, and reached over till his muzzle touched the woolly back. It was an anxious moment, for if he so much as drew in his breath

Flag Island, Where Polaris Was Born

that little snowball might disappear down his throat.

But the big dog was merely puzzled. Long wrinkles gathered on his brow, and he gazed and sniffed as if he had neither seen nor smelled anything like that before. Then he smiled good-

Admiral Peary's Boatman with Sipsu and Acutah, and Robert Peary, Jr., with Polaris

naturedly, gave the puppy a poke with his nose, and waving his tail he sauntered off up the road. The newcomer sat on his haunches and gazed after him.

Ordinarily, Heatherbloom would have followed the Dane, but not this time. She was crouching close to the ground, perhaps fifty feet from the Eskimo puppy, on which her bright brown eyes were fixed intently. Her head lay between her extended paws, and her whole body was tense with suppressed excitement. Presently she began to draw her body stealthily forward over the ground, very slowly at first, then faster and faster, until she launched herself, a sixteen-pounder canine cannon ball, straight at the Arctic doglet. She caught him completely off his guard, if it could be said that he had any guard at that age, and knocked him end over end for several feet across the grass. The most astonished puppy picked himself up, and Heatherbloom, apparently delighted at her success, danced around him in a wild attempt to draw him into a game of tag. For some time the stranger sat tight, not knowing what to make of it all, but at last he stood up, a playful smile

came over his face, and he did his best to be a "sport."

From that day Heatherbloom transferred her affections without reserve to Polaris, and he held

When We Left Flag Island, Many of the Dogs Followed Us Down to the Beach

them ever afterwards. Canine friends came and went, but those two were unwavering in their love and loyalty. As Polaris grew up and passed her in size and strength, their relationship changed somewhat, of course. At first he was her little playmate, and sometimes we had to

rescue him from the strenuous games she made him play. Later he became her guardian and with his splendid body, armed with the jaws of an Arctic wolf, he defended her from enemies and unwelcome suitors alike. She was his shadow—his other self, and at the first approach of danger she deliberately sought refuge behind that all too willing protector. In her way she was just as staunch as he. She would lie between his paws and mount guard while he slept, and at her sharp, startling bark, he was on his feet, his white fangs cleared for action. It is four years now since she has seen him, but she has not forgotten, and at the first quick mention of his name, she will start from her sleep and hunt for him in every corner of the room.

It must not be thought that Polaris's strong affection for Heatherbloom straightway overcame his inherited tendency to look out for Number One. At first this tendency was very close to the surface and showed itself whenever the Scottie's interests clashed with his own. The first time we had marked evidence of this was one day when both dogs came in very hungry and together ran to a dish of food which had

been prepared for them. They had been feeding together in perfect harmony for weeks, but Polaris had been growing proportionately stronger, and on this day the unusual hunger and

Polaris Leaving Flag Island

a limited food supply aroused the latent instinct of self-preservation. Although still a puppy, he growled and bared his teeth, and fell upon his smaller messmate, who would have been seriously injured if we had not rescued her. Later on, however, his fondness for the little

dog apparently overcame this selfish streak, at least in so far as it affected her, and the two would share anything they had with wagging tails and smiling faces.

Polaris Hunting Grasshoppers and Crickets

I believe that if an Eskimo puppy three months old were turned loose in New England in summer, he would require no further assistance in getting his living. Polaris began by hunting grasshoppers and crickets and he soon became very skillful at it. Eyes, ears, and nose

all seemed to help him in his work, and it was hard to tell which he relied on most. Wild mice and shrews were the next game on his list, and he captured these with the same unerring skill. Sometimes as he walked with me along a lane, I would see him leap sideways into the long grass, from which he would return an instant later with a meadow mouse or perhaps a tiny shrew wriggling between his front teeth. Not only had his marvelous senses told him the exact position of that little hidden creature, but there had been such perfect coördination between them and his equally marvelous muscles that the whole dog had become a delicate and deadly instrument of precision.

Even as a puppy he was quite intolerant of confinement. While he might be perfectly willing to stay in the house if the door was open, if it were closed he was very likely to want to go out. And if he wanted to go out, he was pretty sure to go, if cajolery or his own fierce little teeth and claws could make an opening for him. One day when he was quite small he was left in the house with Heatherbloom, and for a time they amused themselves by romping

from room to room, rolling and tumbling about on the floor, and chewing one another's ears and tails. Then it occurred to Polaris that it was nicer outside. Off he marched, with the

Polaris Wriggling through the Screen Door

terrier close behind, but alas, a screen door blocked their way. Through it they could see the sunlit garden, with its flowers and grass and a squirrel which sat on a wall, chattering. They pushed against the door, but it held, and Heatherbloom sat down and hurled her howls of dis-

appointment to the gates of heaven. Not so Polaris. He attacked the screen door, literally "tooth and nail," and when I arrived in answer to Heatherbloom's call, the white puppy was wriggling triumphantly through the hole he had made. To save him the trouble of doing more damage we left the hole in the door, and I think he rather preferred to go in and out that way. Usually he did so in a most leisurely manner, but once when he was very much startled by the savage barking of Beowulf, I saw him make a rush and dive through that door like a clown through a hoop at the circus.

When he was full grown, Polaris was perhaps the most beautiful dog of any breed which I have ever seen. Certainly he was the most beautiful I have ever owned or ever expect to own. Striking as some of his portraits may be, to us who knew him well they are but suggestions. Of course he was at his best in winter, when his splendid coat of spun silver was a robe fit for this king of dogs. The long hair on his shoulders measured nine inches, and that on his tail, which flowed over his hind quarters in a silvery cascade, was more than a foot in length. It gleamed

His Splendid Coat of Spun Silver Was a Fitting Robe

in the sunshine as if it were burnished, and reflected light to a degree almost unbelievable to one who had not seen it. The first time I remember noticing this was one winter afternoon when we were walking into Meriden along the main street. There had been a heavy fall of snow the night before and a snowplow had turned a deep furrow with steep banks on either side. One of the banks was brilliantly lighted by the low sun, the other was in deep transparent shadow. Suddenly I saw on this shadowed surface a moving patch of reflected light, and I turned, half expecting to find some one playing with a mirror. There was no one in sight. I turned again and looked at Polaris, who was trotting ahead, and noticed that the moving light traveled exactly as fast as he did. It was reflected from his glistening coat.

Doubtless it was the same quality in his hair which kept him almost always clean. It was seldom necessary to wash him, for dirt would not stick to that shining hair, beneath which, of course, was a dense woolly coat, which made him indifferent to almost any degree of cold. We might safely have left him out of doors even in

our bitterest weather, but he loved to be inside with us on winter nights, and we loved to have him.

His hazel-brown eyes were somewhat slanting and wolflike. Soft and melting they usually were with us when we were quite alone, friendly always to any one who spoke him fair, but "subject to change without notice" at the first appearance of any animal that even glanced sideways at Heatherbloom.

His nose was black and wet and cold, his tongue like shell-pink velvet, and his teeth clean, swift, and deadly as lightning.

Of his personal attributes perhaps none was more surprising than his breath. Almost every one is familiar with the odor of a healthy dog's breath; it is distinctly "doggy." There was absolutely nothing of this quality about the breath of Polaris. We always said it had the odor of new-mown hay. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that it was as sweet as new-mown hay—more like the breath of a cow than of a dog.

A very interesting trait of Polaris was his gratitude for, or at least his recognition of, benefits conferred. If one gave him his dinner, or

His Hazel-Brown Eyes Were Slanting and Wolflike

set down for him a bowl of water, he never touched it without first looking up, smiling, to catch your eye and wag his tail. This little ceremony performed, he proceeded to eat or drink. He was just as sure to do it as a well-bred guest is sure to catch the eye of his host or hostess when he raises his glass—(I mean as he was when he did) and the courtesy was extended to strangers just as surely as to members of our family. Perhaps that was one of the many reasons why every one was fond of him.

I am sure that Polaris never had an enemy in the world, but it certainly was not because he was a saint. It was because he was one of those rare and glorious characters who are universally beloved in spite of both truth and calumny. Some would not believe that he had any faults, others accepted him with all his faults because they declared that his virtues far outweighed them.

In the former class was Mrs. C—— of Meriden. Mrs. C—— kept sheep. One day Heatherbloom was hunting grasshoppers in the sheep pasture and the sheep chased her out. Right to the bars they chased her just before Polaris

and I came up. Polaris knew nothing about sheep, but he had seen them chasing Heatherbloom—the whole flock of them, cowardly brutes. He saw them now standing there in bold array, their savage eyes gleaming at that tiny dog, his friend, and stamping their angry hoofs in their impatience to get at her. Perhaps that is how they appeared to Polaris. At any rate the long hair of his shoulders arose in a huge mane, and he started forward to settle the score on the spot. Of course I called him to heel and he followed me, with many a backward glance which boded ill for those sheep if he should ever meet them again when I was not there to save them.

Later in the day we were returning through the woods, where I had been to see a wild vireo which I had tamed until she would feed from my hand. I had been so engrossed with the bird that I had forgotten the dogs. Heatherbloom was at heel, but Polaris was not with me. I called and whistled in vain, and then I started for the sheep pasture as hard as I could run. The sheep were not in sight. I slipped through the bars, and alternately calling and whistling,

Heatherbloom

started for a valley where the woolly ones spent much of their time. I met Polaris coming up through the ferns tired but triumphant; his coat was disheveled and streaked with red. In the valley I found fourteen dead sheep. I must not describe them—a wolf could not have been more terrible in destruction. I whipped the dog on the scene of slaughter, but he did not seem to mind it. Seemingly it was but an unpleasant incident in an otherwise wonderful afternoon. He shook himself and walked along, with the air of one who knew that he had done his duty, whether it was appreciated or not. I took him to a brook where I washed him white again. When he was dry we went to call on the owner of the sheep.

"Mrs. C——," I began, "I'm sorry to say that my dog has been down in your pasture and killed fourteen sheep. I have come to pay for those sheep."

Polaris had walked straight across the room, laid his head and right paw in Mrs. C——'s lap, and was looking up into her eyes with the sweetest look of injured innocence I have ever seen on a living face—dog's or human's. His tail

was waving slowly "more in sadness than in anger," and his whole expression seemed to say: "Oh, isn't it terrible to be so wrongfully accused? Don't believe a word that man is telling you. I never killed any of your sheep, and if I did, it was because they deserved it. Dear Mrs. C——, you have known me since I was a little woolly puppy who used to chase your naughty kittens off your back porch that I might lap up the milk which they knew you had put there for me. You know that I never have and never could do anything wrong." The calm and gentle smile of an angel child had spread over his beautiful face, the rosiest of tongues met the hand which sought his head, and his tail moved just a trifle faster, as if urging Mrs. C—— to hasten and free him from this horrible accusation.

The appeal would not have been in vain even if Mrs. C—— had been a stranger. As it was, she had known him for the greater part of his life, and, like every one else who knew him, was in love with him. There was a touch of December in her voice as she rose to his defense.

"How do you know he killed the sheep; did you see him kill them?"

Polaris and Heatherbloom

"No, but——"

"You didn't see him? Well, he never did it. Just look at him! Do you mean to tell me that that dog ever killed a sheep?"

He Scattered Its Stuffing to the Winds of Newton Centre

There was indignation in her voice. I actually found myself on trial for slander, and I was beginning to believe myself guilty.

"Just look at him!" continued the lady, her eyes narrowing as she spoke. "He's the loveliest dog that God ever made, and if all the people

in Meriden told me he was a sheep killer I wouldn't believe it. You didn't see him kill them; I don't see how you could say such a thing." I felt horribly guilty.

She arose as she spoke, and walked to a cupboard, followed by Polaris, who was awarded damages in the form of chocolate layer cake, which he ate very daintily from a plate, after thanking the judge with an upward glance, a smile, and a wag of the tail.

It was always like that wherever he went and whatever he did. There were few who knew Polaris as well as did that sane and unselfish friend of animals, Mrs. F. H. Smith, then President of the Worcester Animal Rescue League. She had rare opportunities to see all his failings, and they were neither few nor small, but her love for him was second to none. In a recent letter she says of him: "My lasting conclusion about Polaris is that he was always a gentleman. He may have been a freebooter occasionally, but he was always a courtly freebooter, and I refuse to remember his few lapses. To me he will always be the noblest dog I ever knew." And when we remember that this tribute comes from

He Gravely Eyed the Teddy Bear

a dog lover who had always kept dogs of her own, and had personally known hundreds of dogs of all breeds, there is little more to be said for the winning personality of Polaris.

"He may have been a freebooter occasionally." Have mercy upon us! Love may not be blind, but he knows when to keep his eyes shut.

Once when we were going away for a month or two we left Polaris with Isaac Bonner, the Meriden stage driver. The Bonners had two sweet little girls and they fell in love with Polaris at once. He was their companion on their rambles in the fields and woods, and Isaac has often told me that he never feared for their safety when "Poly," as they called him, was "along." He was supposed to sleep in the barn, but of course he never did—that is, after the first night or two. The children were put to bed early, and Polaris would steal quietly in, perhaps when they were saying their prayers. He would crawl under the bed and wait until all was quiet. Then he would come out, put up first one paw, then the other, and after a little encouragement, which he was sure to get, he would climb on to the bed and curl up for the

night. Often when the parents would enter softly to see that everything was all right, they would find the children fast asleep with the great white dog between them, and their hands buried in his long warm coat.

Isaac told me that one afternoon he sent a new hired man into the house for a hammer. Mrs. Bonner was out, and the man, not finding the hammer in the kitchen, opened the door of the parlor. But he did not enter. On the sofa the younger of the little girls lay fast asleep, and from close beside her a big white animal arose, menacing, to meet him. The man backed quickly out, closing the door after him.

"Did you get the hammer?" called Isaac, as the man returned to the barn.

"Not on your life, I didn't," growled the man; "there's a Polar bear in that room."

"Shucks!" responded Bonner, "it's only a dog; he wouldn't hurt you."

"He wouldn't, hey? Well, say, if you want that hammer, you'll have to get it. Dog or no dog, this ain't my day for committin' suicide."

No one could have been gentler with those

Polaris with His Best Friend

children than Polaris was. I remember coming back from a walk with him one evening and finding the smaller girl standing in the dooryard, a sweet cookie in each hand. Polaris walked gently up to her, smiling. The child drew back, not because she was afraid of her big pal, but because she wanted those cookies herself. The dog moved toward one of the little hands, and when she pulled it back, he moved toward the other. He could easily have snatched the coveted morsels, for the child was not big enough to prevent him. But that wasn't his way. From one side to the other, and round about the youngster he walked, always smiling, always careful, until he fairly outwitted his playmate by gently "lifting" one of the cookies, which disappeared before the astonished little girl quite realized what had happened. But he hadn't finished yet, for there was another cookie to get, and he got that one, too, by exactly the same method. And the child, instead of being frightened or vexed, regarded the whole thing as a big joke, and throwing her arms around his neck she cried, "You good old bad dog, Poly, you've eaten both my cookies."

Isaac had a farm and he taught the Arctic dog the art of herding cows. This was a job Polaris liked. It required action, and thanks to his zeal every cow in the herd soon realized that there's a time for everything, and that the milking hour is not the time to loiter picking daisies. But there was one cow which never came to be milked. She had strayed away on the mountain-side behind the house, and had become so wild that for more than a year no one had been able to round her up. Indeed, she was very seldom seen, and how she had survived a long and bitter New Hampshire winter was one of the unsolved mysteries of Meriden. Then one afternoon Isaac saw her standing on the side of the hill, the evening sun shining full on her spotted hide. She had become as thin as a doe and almost as agile. Isaac looked at her in desperation, and under his breath said something which would lead one to believe that he hoped she would spend next winter in a much warmer climate.

Then Polaris trotted into the yard. The stage driver had an inspiration. He caught the dog up in his strong arms, and pointed to the cow.

The Puppy Polaris with Beowulf

It was some moments before Polaris was "on," but at last he saw her. There was an instant's

Heatherbloom Watching Beowulf Jump

pause as those bright eyes took their focus; then a quick squirm and he was gone.

"Bring her in, boy!" yelled Isaac, but it is

doubtful if the eager dog even heard the sound of his voice. He didn't need to; he knew just what was wanted. With his long white hair rippling along his sides and shoulders, he seemed to pour himself up the hillside and he was soon lost to view in the bushes which dotted the pasture. Another moment and the cow had business somewhere else. Minutes passed and all that could be heard was the call of a nighthawk and the song of a distant hermit thrush. Then there came a loud peal of what might fairly be called "bovine thunder," which silenced the hermit thrush and drowned the cry of the nighthawk. It rolled and echoed through the hills, and grew nearer and louder. Just what was happening Isaac could not tell. Somewhere behind the curtain of green, a quick-moving drama was being enacted, but as Polaris never gave tongue, one could only guess that actions were speaking louder than barks. Presently the bushes of the pasture were seen to wave frantically, with a rushing sound as if they had been struck by a sudden northeast gale, and with a thundering bellow, the spotted wild cow burst into view, extended like a thoroughbred in the home

stretch, and swept through the pasture bars into the barnyard, with the white Polaris streaming out behind like a comet, his teeth locked in the tuft at the end of her tail.

PART II

IN THE PRIDE OF HIS STRENGTH

THE life of Polaris is so closely interwoven with that of Heatherbloom, the Scottie, that a word about her will help us to understand some of his activities. She is a very gentle little terrier, high strung and nervous, but intelligent and quick to make known her wants and her fears, whatever they may be. Once in a storm at Bailey Island, Maine, she saw me dive into the ocean and disappear in the mist. She watched the surf in evident anxiety for some time, and then sat down on the rocks and wailed like a banshee. If on a walk she finds herself "left behind," if she believes that she is lost, or if there is impending danger from which she sees no escape, she raises her little whiskered muzzle into the air and gives vent to mournful howls which would touch the heart of an ogre.

Polaris knew these howls, and, in a general way, what they meant. He was quick to respond,

Heatherbloom Wailed Like a Banshee

and if the cause happened to have four legs, nothing less than blood would be accepted as an apology. He was no pacifist. He came of a hardy race which had to fight to live. His parents hailed from a stern land where life itself was one long fight, and where refusal to fight hard or to work hard meant death, as quick as it was certain. So his self-imposed guardianship of Heatherbloom was much to his liking. It gave him a half legitimate outlet for his boundless energy, his strength and ferocity, and doubtless saved him from many punishments which would have come to him had all his fights been fought solely on his own account. One must not judge too harshly a knight who rescues a lady, even though in his zeal he uses more force than to the onlooker seems necessary. To save the lady is the main thing, after all, and if the "villain" gets hurt, why, that's the villain's lookout.

Perhaps the sagacious selectmen of our town looked at it in just this way when Polaris saved Heatherbloom from almost certain death in our own garden. A well-meaning but careless farmer living near us made a practice of permitting his cattle to wander round the country-

side, and not infrequently they would stray into our place and work havoc among the flowers and vegetables. Polaris was often called on to help me drive them away, and he did this as he did everything else with the "promptness, energy, and dispatch" which characterized the work of his parents in the Arctic.

One Indian summer afternoon while he was taking a nap, Heatherbloom ran out to play. Leading from our orchard to the garden was a very narrow path with a board fence on either side and a wire-netting gate at the end. The little terrier was hunting mice down near this gate when the offending herd strayed into the orchard. With her nose buried in the grass, she was so intent on the business in hand that she never noticed the intruders, until approaching hoofs caused her to look up to find a surly cow bearing down upon her from the farther end of the path.

Heatherbloom was trapped and she knew it. The boarded path was all too narrow for her to pass the cow, and she could neither jump nor climb the gate. Surely her hour had struck. If only her pal were there!

Polaris was stretched out on the veranda

Polaris and Heatherbloom in Cornish

asleep. For any sign of life he gave he might have been dead. Then there came a pathetic wail—a beseeching howl from the direction of the orchard, and he was on his feet, eyes, ears, and nose pointing in the direction of the sound. For the space of a lightning flash he was a living statue, then he was away. He did not stop to go round by the steps; he cleared the piazza railing without touching it, and tore down the garden path like white water through a mill race.

The cow lowered her head for the final rush, and had she made the rush, the limp remains of a Scottish terrier would have been tossed over the fence among the phlox and larkspur. But it was not to be, for Polaris, like a white flame, leaped on and over that cow, and I doubt if she ever knew whether she had been attacked by one dog or ten. I did not see him when, a few minutes later, he came back to the house with his wonderful coat dyed crimson, but half an hour later I found him and Heatherbloom lying side by side in a trout pool, the water of which was red.

That night very late a farmer drove into Claremont with a consignment of freshly killed beef.

The selectmen returned a verdict of "justifiable bovicide."

When the clean and sparkling New Hampshire winter came, Polaris was literally in his element. He could not go to the Arctic, but the Arctic had come to him, and he made himself a part of it. He raced through the cold dry snow, and rolled and buried himself in the drifts, until his marvelous coat gleamed like the snow itself.

He was always a powerful dog for his age, largely owing to a fine constitution, good feeding, and plenty of exercise. We lived on the side of Croydon Mountain, about two and a half miles from the Meriden post office, and as I always walked to the village for the mail, the dogs never had less than five miles a day. Usually they had much more than that, and sometimes they would go thirty miles or more 'twixt dawn and dawn.

And he soon began to make himself useful. We fashioned a packsaddle for him, and in the saddlebags he carried the mail and express packages from the village to the house. Sometimes on snowshoes I would hike across the open country to call on friends ten or fifteen miles

He Could Not Go to the Arctic, but the Arctic Had Come to Him

away, and Polaris would carry his share of the duffle—loaned or borrowed books, extra sweaters, and some food for himself in case our friends were away. Thus one day we visited the "Brownbeards" in their isolated home on a Cornish hilltop, and while the humans read and chatted, the star dog, fed and comfortable, occupied an honored place before the blazing fire. Going home that night under a brilliant moon, Polaris saw a rabbit frisking on the snow, and the call of the wild was much stronger than any call of mine. He returned eventually without the rabbit, and almost minus the packsaddle, which, after a vicious encounter with a barbed-wire fence, was sadly in need of repairs.

When our friends happened to be out, there was no need of leaving a card; a few long hairs from Polaris's coat tied to the door knob were quite enough to identify the callers.

It was the sight of Polaris with express packages sticking out of his saddlebags which suggested the character of a Christmas party we were to give to the country children living near us. It should be a Santa Claus party, with at least one original feature. I shall never forget

the night. The kiddies had been feasted and were sitting on the floor in the firelight, listening to a ghost story. As it ended, the wide-eyed youngsters were frankly startled by a loud knock at the door, and as frankly relieved as well as delighted to find that the visitor was none other than their old friend Santa Claus. But for once old Santa had to play second fiddle, for instead of unseen reindeer shaking more or less convincing bells outside, the King of Joybringers had right at his heels a great white snow dog, with a collar of pine cones and a huge pack fairly bristling with colored toys and bright mysterious packages. Polaris strode in among the children, smiling and wagging his tail, and plainly asking every boy and girl in the group to come and see what he had brought for them. Santa Claus simply "wasn't in it." "The dog was the thing," and the children fell upon him, yelling with delight. And he enjoyed the occasion as much as any one, and when his pack had been rifled to the very last box of candy, he went from one to another to wheedle his share of the spoils. Later he joined the children in a game, and when at last they all sat around the hearth to hear a "good

Polaris Would Carry His Share of the Duffle

night" story, he lay with his head in a little girl's lap and blinked lazily at the dying fire.

On Christmas morning I led him into the breakfast room, proudly wearing new harness and drawing a light sledge, and presented him with his equipment to Mrs. Baynes. A few days before I had tried him out after a heavy snowstorm. When I hitched him up for the very first time, he never attempted to bite the harness—he did not even turn around to look at it or to ask "Why?" He threw his broad chest into the breastplate and hauled the sledge through the snowdrifts to Meriden and back again.

As he showed that he enjoyed the work and took pride in it, Mrs. Baynes often used him in harness. She is very light and not half a load for a well built sledge dog. To make an intentional "bull," the only "drawback" to using him was that he often went much faster than she cared to travel. I might have used him in this way, too, but never did except in a new sport which we developed, and which we called "dog-coasting." At the top of a long hill I would throw myself face downward on the sled, in the position known to country boys of my day as "belly whop-

pers," and then urge Polaris to top speed. Away he would "streak it" down the hill, so fast that it seemed his own shadow must be left behind. It was exciting enough when he went perfectly straight, but when, as sometimes happened, he suddenly decided to chase a squirrel on the fence, the sharp change of direction would cause the passenger to continue the journey (for a short distance at least) entirely alone. As a rolling man gathers much of whatever he rolls in, when the dog-coaster finally picked himself up he was likely to resemble a winter scarecrow. I speak with feeling, for usually I was the passenger.

To Polaris, sledge work was always more or less of a pastime, and he never permitted it to interfere with real business. If there was anything to run after or to fight with, he ran after it or fought with it, and that his movements were more or less impeded by a sledge and harness was simply an unfortunate circumstance. One day Mrs. Baynes was driving him back from the village with a mixed load, and was approaching the house, when Polaris saw a big sheep dog coming out of our dooryard. He was one of

Polaris in Harness

Heatherbloom's unwelcome suitors, and before Mrs. Baynes could speak, the whole outfit—sledge dog, harness, sledge, and load—was taking part in a dog fight. The load was the first to quit, and it flew in every direction. Most of it was recovered later, but ten pounds of rice escaped from a paper bag and never came back. The sheep dog was next to get away, and for this good luck he must thank the harness and the sledge, for if Polaris had been unhampered by these, his opponent would not have been able to thank any one, even if he had had anything to be thankful for.

The following summer found us in Cornish, New Hampshire, where Polaris saw many new things, and had many new experiences. One day he and Heatherbloom were exploring in a neighbor's garden when they came upon a row of tiny wooden houses, each with a single doorway through which queer-looking flies were crawling in and out. There was a delicious odor coming from those little houses, and both dogs started to investigate. The Scottie was too short to reach up, but Polaris stood on his hind legs and sniffed at one of the doorways. Instantly some-

thing inside the house bit him hard on the nose. He made a frantic snap at his assailant, knocked the house completely over, and found to his disgust that there was no enemy inside—only a lot of flies. But they were different from any flies he had ever met before. A few of them alighted on Heatherbloom, and, calling frantically for "pen-an'-ink, pen-an'-ink" and with her tail between her legs, she made a black streak in the direction of our house. Polaris's long coat protected him for a few moments, but his muzzle and his feet were exposed to the attack, and for once he, too, completely lost his dignity. To be sure, he did not cry out—that was beneath him—but he leaped into the air, rolled on the ground, and raced round and round in the long grass as if his tail was on fire. Fortunately, both dogs succeeded in brushing off most of their angry little foes before much damage was done, but they had learned a lesson in entomology which quite chilled their enthusiasm for little houses that smelled of honey.

One of his great joys was Blow-me-down Brook, which flowed through the woods at some distance from the house. Here he came with

The Sheep Dog

Heatherbloom on hot summer days, to lie or swim in the cool water, or to hunt small game among the ferns and wild flowers of a little island in the stream. What he liked even better was to run down there with me through the wet

Here He Came to Lie in the Cool Water

pasture when I went for my early morning dip. While I bathed in a deep pool, he would lie on the bank, and, with his busy paws, fish out frogs or turtles which he could see through the clear water. He never intentionally hurt these things, but would set one carefully on a stone or on the shore and watch it with eager interest. If it

slipped back into the brook he would fish it out again.

He went with me everywhere, and his presence always insured an interesting if not always a restful day. He was as graceful in action as he was beautiful in line and coloring. As he raced in the wind, his long coat flowed and rippled like a breaking wave. Most human companions (excepting Orientals in native costume) add nothing to the beauty of a landscape. If they wear modern Western clothes, they usually detract from it. But a good dog, unmarred by fashion, enhances the loveliness of the loveliest scene. No matter where Polaris stood—on a rocky peak against the clouds, on the snow with a background of pines, among the goldenrod and wild asters, or reflected in the water of a lake—he always made a picture. It is years since I have seen him, but he has left as memories a hundred joyous pictures of himself. There is a touch of sadness in them, too, because they are but memories. When I am in the country, I rarely reach for my hat without thinking of him and missing him, and more than once I have forgotten that he was not still at my heel.

No Matter Where Polaris Stood He Always Made a Picture

And my neighbors have memories of him, too, some of them very exciting ones. There is the man who owns the pigsty on the way to the post office. He remembers Polaris. And I'm sure the pigs remember him if they are still living. I can see him now as he used to race for that pigsty. Of course I would call him, but there were some temptations which he couldn't resist. This was one. It was not that he paid no attention to me. He responded to the call by slowing down, sometimes by stopping altogether. But he would not turn round. He would look back over his shoulder, smiling a mischievous smile, and madly waving his tail, as much as to say: "I'm coming—just a minute, old man—there's something over here that I want to see." And away he would go, fairly laughing at me as he went. Arriving at the pigpen, he would leap the wall, chase the pigs round and round, nip their heels to make them go faster, and perhaps to hear them squeal. Then, as he heard me coming up at "double time," he would leap out of the pen again, and still laughing and waving his tail in jocular defiance, away he would go for a gallop through the fields to return to heel

when perhaps he thought I had forgotten all about it.

I think it was his strong affection for Heatherbloom which finally led him to regard all other dogs as enemies. I do not believe that Heatherbloom was ever for a moment disloyal to him, but once in Cornish she committed an indiscretion which nearly resulted in tragedy. Living near us there was a lady who owned another Scottie, and one day Heatherbloom met him on the road. Usually she ignored other dogs, but this time she didn't. He was the first of her own breed she had ever seen since leaving her mother. Moreover, he was very handsome—for a Scottie. Heatherbloom made right up to him, and after much nosing and tail wiggling, the two celebrated the meeting by a circular race through the fields. Then Polaris trotted around the corner and saw them together. I shall never forget his look of astonishment, or how it changed to one of anger. Polaris was terrible in anger. It required all my "influence" to prevent him from dividing by two the number of Scotties in sight.

About a month later I was driving near the

Hunting for Meadow Mice

home of the lady who owned Heatherbloom's new friend. Polaris was running beside the carriage. As we rounded a turn in the road, I saw a Scottish terrier perhaps a hundred yards ahead. Polaris saw him, too, and was under way as if fired from a gun. The little Scotchman had all his wits about him and fled toward his own garden as fast as his short legs and twinkling feet could carry him. His mistress stood on the lawn and saw the danger, and as her pet reached her side, she snapped him from the ground. But Polaris's blood was up, and he was not to be denied. Nothing in the world would have induced him to hurt the lady, but she was harboring the enemy, and that he wouldn't permit. He leaped straight at her and snatched the smaller dog from her arms. Meanwhile I had wasted no time in calling to Polaris; I knew that I had to reach him before he killed the Scottie. To do this I must take a chance with my horse and I took it. Without even pulling him up, I threw the reins on to the seat, leaped over the front wheel, and ran as hard as I could toward the scene of the impending execution. Fortunately, Scotties are tough little rascals, but even so, I

got there barely in time to save the life of this one.

The reader must know that I am anything but proud to relate such an incident as the above, but as I have said, Polaris had many failings, and if I attempted to hide them, this story of his life would not be a truthful one. He was an Eskimo dog, and Eskimo dogs, like "single men in barracks, don't turn into plaster saints."

Nor am I especially proud of an incident which occurred one autumn afternoon on which Polaris and I set off over the hills to call on a well-known artist. Going up toward the artist's garden, Polaris trotted well ahead of me and I saw him reach the house and enter the long drawing-room through the open glass door at the end. I knew that his appearance would inform the family that I was coming, and expected to see them run out to greet me. But this time they didn't. Instead, a terrific uproar broke out in the hitherto quiet house. Children screamed, grown people shouted, and overturned furniture made the customary crash. I rushed to the glass door and looked in on one of the most remarkable sights I have ever seen. Apparently, the

Mrs. Baynes with Polaris and Heatherbloom

governess had been giving a dancing lesson to the two little girls, one of whom now stood upon the piano, while the younger clasped the skirts of the governess. At the farther end of the room a bright log fire was burning, and in front of it what seemed to be a gigantic living black and white pinwheel was revolving rapidly to the sound of horrid canine oaths and "cuss words." Alas, I had not known that my neighbors had recently acquired a large black dog. In front of the pinwheel was the most energetic artist I have ever seen, shouting at the top of his gentlemanly voice, "Get out! Get out! Get out!" His long arms were raised above his head; his right hand held aloft a half-finished canvas, the other clutched his pendant locks. At first glance I thought he was executing the Highland fling, for his loose-jointed legs were moving up and down in a manner which suggested that historic dance. Then I saw that he was kicking two dogs, using his feet alternately. But he might as well have kicked Ascutney Mountain, for I'm sure that neither dog was aware of his presence; they were much too busy for that.

This all takes time to tell, but it was seen

almost at a glance as I ran down the room, hurdling a prostrate easel and dodging a fallen chair. The big black dog was fighting gamely, and weight was in his favor. But he was fighting a whirlwind. The speed and abandon of his opponent were almost beyond belief, and the wolf jaws of Polaris were already at his throat. A single ripping toss of that great white head and it might be too late. With both hands I dove straight into the struggling mass, and a moment later the black dog was led into another room, while I hung on to the white one. Of course I expected to be bitten and I was not disappointed. A doctor in Windsor cauterized seven different wounds on my hands and arms, whether inflicted by one dog or both it was impossible to tell.

Now according to all the rules, the artist and his family should have hated Polaris for this unwarranted attack, but just because he was Polaris they couldn't and didn't. "The King can do no wrong." So, after assuring themselves that their new pet had not been very seriously hurt, two little girls brought a bowl of water and a sponge with which I washed the foam and blood of battle from the white dog's jaws. Then

He Would Sit in Silence Watching the Blue Hills of Cornish

they lay down with Polaris on a rug before the fire, and perhaps tried to answer a question I'm sure he must have asked them—"My dear young playmates, why do you keep such a horrid dog?"

It was winter again when I received from Dr. T—— of Boston an invitation to attend a dinner he was giving to Captain Robert Bartlett, the famous skipper of the *Roosevelt,* and the *Karluk.* To go to Boston and back meant a trip of nearly 350 miles, and the loss of at least two days, and as I could not think of any particular contribution I could make to the dinner, I regretfully declined the invitation. That night an idea occurred to me—I would go and take Polaris. The star dog always made a hit wherever he went, and I knew that this would be no exception.

As we arrived in Boston that evening, and alighted at North Station, admirers of Polaris surrounded us as they always did when he appeared in public. We worked our way through the crowd to the street, and in order to stretch our limbs after the long hours on the train, we walked to Dr. T——'s. The dog had never looked more handsome. His coat was at its very

best, and as he strode through the streets, almost every one turned to look at him and to exclaim at his beauty. Once I heard some one running behind me, and turned to meet a fashionably dressed man whose every look betrayed his admiration. He questioned me eagerly about the dog, and then: "Is he for sale? Would $—— be any inducement to part with him?" The offer was a generous one, but no dog of mine has ever been for sale at any price. So I laughed and thanked him and left him disappointed.

There was one man absent from the dinner that night, whom every one of us knew and missed. He had vanished into the Arctic long ago, and it was two years since he had been heard from. "To Stefansson, living or dead," said our host, raising his glass, and we drank it standing and in silence.

It was the one solemn touch given to an otherwise festive occasion, on which practically every guest contributed some unique feature. When at last my own turn came, I told them a story of a dog—an Eskimo dog whose parents had known Captain Bartlett in the Arctic, and had helped to pull Peary's first sledge to the

The Author with His Great Dane, Beowulf

Pole. This dog, I explained, had learned from his parents many things of interest to explorers, including the amusing story of Dr. Cook, which he had told to me in confidence. Often under the stars on clear winter nights, he would sit in the snow outside my study window and sing me wild sagas of the North. When he heard that I was to attend the Bartlett dinner, he had sung to me of the discovery of the North Pole and of Captain Bartlett's part in it, and had asked me to jot down his song and take it with me to the dinner. This I had done, and now, with their kind permission, I would read them some Eskimo doggerel by a genuine Eskimo dog, Polaris, who pleaded guilty, offered no excuses, and hoped to be forgiven if only on the ground that his parents had a "pull" with Captain Bartlett in the Arctic.

ROBERT BARTLETT

By Polaris the Glorious

Translated directly from the Eskimese, by his pal, Ernest Harold Baynes

Peary went to Newfoundland, a-looking for a
sailor.

He spied a likely-looking chap, who'd just come
off a "whaler."
Blue were his eyes and brown his hair,
His legs were long, his shoulders square,
His frame like a full-size Polar bear,
And his name was Robert Bartlett.

Said Peary, "You're the man for me, or I am
much mistaken.
I've one more chance to find the Pole, and I've
got to save my bacon.
I have the money, men, and dogs,
The pemmican and the Arctic togs,
And some things not in the catalogs,
But I just need Captain Bartlett."

So Peary took the *Roosevelt* and her Newfound-
land skipper;
They sailed away into the North, by two stars
from "the Dipper."
And the man who pushed the good ship
through
And bust the icebergs clean in two,
As none but God and he could do,
Was good old Robert Bartlett.

They came unto the Arctic Sea, and tied the tight
ship tighter,
As it was then as dark as—Well! they stayed up
till it grew lighter.
Then off they marched at peep of day
And a man there was who hewed the way,

The Finest Eskimo Dog in the World

And fought the ice like a wolf at bay,
He fought like—Robert Bartlett.

But when they came to "eighty-eight," Bob
pointed with his finger.
"I guess you know the way from here; no need
for me to linger.
Five days from now you bet your soul
You'll find yourself at the long-sought goal,
And nail your flag to the old North Pole
Or my name's not Robert Bartlett."

So Peary went and found the Pole; the Stars
and Stripes nailed to it,
With Henson, dogs, and Eskimos, as our Bob
said he'd do it.
While back across the ice fields bare,
Braving the leads with courage rare,
There strode the man who helped him there;
That good sport, Robert Bartlett.

So when we honor Peary brave, as we are wont
to do it;
And when we d——n old Dr. C——k, who said
he beat him to it,
We'll drink long life to the sailor tight,
Who sailed the *Roosevelt* aright,
Our friend, the honored guest to-night.
STAND UP—for Robert Bartlett.

Every man was on his feet with a long cheer for the gallant Captain, and as the glasses rang

down, from several guests (a little wiser than the others) came cries of "Author! Author! Author!" Then a door opened and in walked Polaris in all the pride of his winter coat. Like a living snowdrift he moved past the diners and I met him at the end of the hall. There a small table had been set on purpose, and, taking him in my arms, I heaved him onto it. Steady as a white marble statue he appeared against the dark wainscoting behind him. For the space of ten seconds he stood there in silence, and then there came a burst of applause such as few dogs have been given before or since. And at the end of it, he received perhaps the greatest tribute ever paid to a dog of his breed by a man who knew. "He's the finest Eskimo dog in the world." It was said with emphasis and conviction, and it was Captain "Bob" himself who said it.

Afterwards he held a reception and greeted in turn Sir Douglas Mawson, Robert Bartlett, W. B. Cabot, Donald B. MacMillan, William Lord Smith, Townsend Thorndike, "Peter" Howe, and many more—human explorers, who with pats and caresses paid tribute to a prince of the

blood, the son of the greatest canine explorers of all time. Then he stretched himself at my feet, and gravely listened while Bartlett told his thrilling story of "The Last Voyage of the *Karluk*."

PART III

VARIOUS ADVENTURES

MANY times Polaris gave me cause to remember Admiral Peary's last words to me concerning him: "As soon as he is big enough, he will kill chickens, and you will never be able to break him of the habit." On my desk as I write, there lies a polite note from the selectmen of our town, beginning, "We have received a bill from I. W. Spalding for $—— for chickens killed by your dog in August." I paid the bill, of course, and only wondered why it should be so small.

He began to chase hens long before he was big enough to overpower one, and he never lost his keen interest in this branch of sport. If he killed sheep and dogs and even a cow occasionally, from a sense of duty, I feel sure that he hunted hens for the sheer fun of it. When he undertook a real fight he went in with mane erect and with "the scowl of battle on his brow"; he was in deadly earnest. But hen-hunting was differ-

Three Friends of Polaris—Haakon, Monroe Barnard, and Beowulf

ent, and more in the nature of light amusement. Hens are such squawky, flighty, fluttery things; perhaps they appealed to his sense of humor. At any rate he always appeared to be laughing when he chased one, and when he had caught and killed it, he would look up smiling and wagging his tail, and with a rather uncertain manner, as if to say, "Now what shall I do with the blamed thing?"

There was no use in whipping him. He would take his punishment with more din than dignity, but the moment it was over he would give himself a shake and—"Gee! that hurt—hello! there's another one." And sure enough, he would be off in pursuit of another chicken.

An amusing story is told of a chicken hunt which took place one Sunday morning just outside the church in our village. The service was in progress when a long-legged rooster strutted into the churchyard, mounted the front steps, flapped his heavy wings noisily, and let out a raucous challenge which so startled an old lady sitting near the door that she lost her place.

My secretary, Miss B——, lives in a house quite near the church. She was lying in a ham-

mock on the porch and Polaris sat beside her, asking her confidentially if she had any more cookies like those she had given him yesterday. Then he heard the rooster, and, looking up, saw the ridiculous creature on the steps of the church. Whether he was afraid that further crowing would disturb the worshipers, or whether he felt bound to accept the challenge, any nature faker can tell you. But whatever the motive he lost no time in showing his disapproval, and the next moment the long-legged rooster, with a fairly good handicap, was setting him a hot pace around the sacred edifice. The minister had just given out the number of a hymn, when the choir boys looking out of the window saw the rooster, wings extended, leading Polaris on the first lap.

"Half a dollar on the rooster," whispered one of the choir boys—he was a newcomer. "I'll take you—I'll take you," whispered several others eagerly—they all knew Polaris. Then the hymn began, and as the rooster didn't stick to the course, the singing was well under way when the contestants came round again. Chanticleer was still leading, but in spite of his dodg-

ing and twisting and the frequent use of his wings, Polaris had the contest well in hand. To paraphrase Kipling:

> "A bird has two legs
> A dog has four legs
> And two into four goes twice."

A Garrison finish, a single squawk, and the race was over, directly in front of the open window.

"Hallelujah! 'tis done," sang the choir. One of the choir boys was coughing and the rest found it difficult to go on. Polaris began to pluck his victim, and as the feathers rose in the air, an irreverent wind carried some of them straight through the window and on to the crowns of the best Sunday hats. This was more than perfectly human boys could stand, and the end of the chorus made up in noise what it lacked in music. Another verse would have been utterly impossible, but, fortunately, the minister looked out of the window, took in the situation, and with something suspiciously like a twinkle in his eye saved the day by announcing quietly, "We will omit the remainder of the hymn."

One winter day I received a telephone call from a kindly but not a dog-wise man who asked

me if I wanted another Eskimo dog. He said that he had seen Polaris when I first brought him to Meriden, and wishing to own a puppy just like him, had bought one of the same litter from

He Was a Skeleton in a Fur Coat

Admiral Peary. He was now full grown, but it was impossible to do anything with him. He was kept chained up because the last time he had been loosed it had taken over two hours to catch him again. Every one was afraid to go near him, even to feed him and to give him water. He had grown ill and emaciated and

could not live unless some one could be found who would understand him and give him the care he needed.

Polaris was really all the Eskimo dogs I needed for my own health; nevertheless, I agreed to do what I could for this one on condition that if I succeeded in bringing him back to health, I should be allowed to find a good home for him, and that if I considered him too far gone, he should be humanely destroyed. As President of the local Humane Society, I arranged with another officer, Dr. Huse, to meet him and to telephone me a report of his condition. When the report came, I learned that the dog was able to stand up, but unable to walk, and that the doctor would bring him to me in a sleigh.

I have seen more wretched dogs than this one, but not many. He was a skeleton with a fur coat on. I made a good bed for him in one corner of my study so that I could observe him closely, and so that he might become used to my presence. I did not confine him in any way. Then I got a plate of food—not too much, for I did not know the condition of his stomach.

When I approached, he drew back into his corner in sullen fear and would not even look at the food. However, I left it in front of him and went back to my desk. It was some minutes before I observed a slight movement in his corner. He was looking at the food. Very slowly, and in evident fear, he drew himself toward the plate. Two or three quick jerks of his head, the contents of the plate had disappeared, and the dog crouched in his corner as before. At once I went and sat down beside him, spoke to him, patted him, and in every way let him see that I approved of his taking the food. After watching to see that there were no ill effects, I got him something more, and this time he did not hesitate so long before taking it. Again I petted him, and gradually his fear of me became less pronounced. Two days later he went with me to Meriden and back without a leash. Once outside he would not allow me to touch him, nor would he come close to me. But he followed at a little distance and showed no disposition to run away.

Polaris went with us. I should like to be able to record that he at once recognized his long-

The Author with Polaris

lost brother and fell upon his neck in the fervor of brotherly affection. Of course, there was no recognition whatever. Moreover, the newcomer made a grave mistake by showing a friendly interest in Heatherbloom. The latter scorned his attempts to play with her and ran behind her protector to avoid them. But alas, the poor starveling was too inexperienced to take the hint, and when Polaris did fall on his neck there was nothing fraternal in the embrace. It required prompt and energetic action to save the neck in question, and during the entire walk it was necessary to keep one eye on Polaris, in order that his brother might be "present" rather than "accounted for" at the next roll call.

When we returned, he would not come into the house at once, and coaxing only made him withdraw to a greater distance. But I would leave the door open, and in a few minutes he would steal furtively in and hurry to the corner which was "home" to him. Even here he was not at his ease. His strange wild eyes searched the ceiling and the walls, in dread of I knew not what, and at the slightest unusual sound or any sudden movement, he shrank terrified into the

smallest possible space. But good food and gentle handling did their work, and then it was interesting to watch him develop. At first he was so ravenously hungry that his teeth clashed against the sides of his metal dish, he would bolt the entire contents in two or three huge mouthfuls, and the dish itself seemed in danger of following the food down his throat.

Slowly the skeleton put on its clothing, and the wrinkles in the fur coat began to fill out. His eye became brighter, he began to smile and wag his tail a bit when he saw me, and to take a little interest in life. We named him "Rescued." Poor fellow, he had never had any real puppyhood, and now it seemed that all the latent puppy instincts began to show themselves. He would frisk about on his ungainly legs, dance up and down with a cheerful, idiotic look on his face, pull my coat to ask me to play with him, and in other ways make just as big a fool of himself as possible. Naturally, he was exactly the same age as his brother Polaris, but Polaris had had a natural puppyhood, and had long since turned his mind to matters more important than pulling coat tails and doing silly dances.

Of course, we encouraged Rescued to play, and we played with him until he lost much of his fear and became a fairly happy dog. We found him a home with kindly folk, but he never quite

Polaris Would Walk Sedately on the Outside—Heatherbloom on the Inside

overcame the effects of his early experiences and he died comparatively young.

Several times I have spoken of the great speed of Polaris. It was not, of course, comparable to that of a whippet or a greyhound, but very surprising in a dog of his build. One use he

made of it at first was not to be tolerated; he would catch wild birds on the wing. As he ran through the grass a small bird would rise in front of him, and with a rush ending in a rocketing leap, he would catch it before it could rise to safety. I saw him do this twice; the first time the victim was a cedar waxwing, the second time a vesper sparrow. Then I took special pains to break him of it, for bird killers—canine, feline, or human—are not tolerated in Meriden, "The Bird Village." He was my constant companion in my walks through the bird sanctuary, and while he was allowed to drink at the bird baths, no other liberties were permitted. The decorous behavior of the dogs when approaching the sanctuary was sometimes almost ludicrous. Polaris would walk sedately on the outside, Heatherbloom on the inside—looking like two very good children on their way to Sunday school. With a very little imagination one could see the hymn books under their arms.

To be sure, if Polaris saw a skunk or a woodchuck in the sanctuary, he killed it promptly. But that was directly in the line of duty, and no one found fault with him. Skunks eat birds'

He Was Allowed to Drink at the Bird Baths

eggs and young birds, and woodchucks destroy certain crops which we plant for our feathered guests. But when Polaris killed, he killed swiftly, as became an honorary member of the

An Honorary Member of the New Hampshire S. P. C. A.

New Hampshire S. P. C. A. The President of that society met him on the train one day and conferred the honor with her own hand.

But the star dog did not spend all his life in Meriden or even in New Hampshire. When I went away on lecture tours he often went with me and attended my lectures, lying beside me on

the platform during the "show." Afterwards he always got the lion's share of the attention bestowed by the audience, and he accepted it as befitted a nobleman. Nowhere was he more popular than at the schools. Sometimes when

The Pupils Had Taken Him Away on a Lark

my train was about to start, Polaris was not to be found; the pupils had taken him away on a lark, into the spirit of which he entered with as much enthusiasm as his adoring young hosts or hostesses. Then, of course, he would have to be their guest for days—for a week or two sometimes, until I could come back for him or until

he could be brought to me. Old Fay School boys will remember entertaining Polaris more than once in this way; so will the boys and girls of Tilton Seminary and many another. And not long ago when I went back to one of these schools and sat down in the guest room, I found the great white dog smiling down upon me from the wall.

Then suddenly all our plans were changed. We must go away for an indefinite period, and something must be done with the dogs. Polaris was an easy dog to find a home for, but a hard dog to find the right home for. After very careful thought I offered him as a sledge dog to Dr. Wilfred Grenfell—"Grenfell of Labrador," who had met him and admired him in Meriden. Since we must part, what more fitting life could there be for a great dog than that of companion and assistant to a great man doing a noble work for humanity? Dr. Grenfell had only one objection to accepting him, namely, that having been gently reared, and being a stranger to Labrador, the hardy, professional sledge dogs would fall upon him and tear him to pieces. I have great respect for Dr. Grenfell's opinion on any

subject, but somehow I couldn't feel a bit worried about our "pup." I knew in my heart that if there had to be any dog-killing done up there, Polaris would come pretty near being "the life of the funeral." But I said: "Dr. Grenfell, of course there is no telling what the whole pack may do to him, but Heaven help any dog that tries to do it alone."

Next year I met Dr. Grenfell in New York, and he told me that my confidence had not been misplaced. On his arrival in Labrador Polaris was put into a pen with three other dogs. He promptly licked the three. Later a pack of dogs came in off the trail. Polaris whipped them all but one—an enormous Husky—and fought a draw with him. It now seemed as if no more fighting would be necessary, and the man in charge of the dogs went out. An hour later he returned. In a corner lay the big Husky, glancing up rather nervously from under his eyelids, while the Peary dog stalked about the arena with his hackles up and an expression on his face which seemed to say, "Next!" In short, Polaris had thrashed every dog he had met, killed two of them, and fought his way clean to the top.

Any one who knows those Labrador Huskies knows that it took a superdog to do that. But I am getting ahead of my story.

It was in the autumn that Dr. Grenfell accepted Polaris, and as no vessel would leave

The President of the Worcester Animal Rescue League with Polaris

for Labrador until the following spring, it was necessary to find a home for him for the winter. So I sent him to Mrs. F. H. Smith, President of the Worcester Animal Rescue League, to be boarded until the time came for him to go away with his new master. Well I knew that he would get every care that a dog should have, and still

not be made a fool of. I knew that she would never tie up his hair with a pink ribbon or put rubbers on him when he went out for a walk. Mrs. Smith combines humanity with sanity. She knows dogs and horses "backwards," as the saying goes, and makes great and real sacrifices for them. But she has a proper sense of proportion; she loves animals—she doesn't worship them. She gave Polaris a wonderful time—the kind of time a real dog enjoys. Like most dogs he was daft about automobiles, and sat proudly beside her in her car. Mr. Cooper, Superintendent of the League, was devoted to him also, and took him for long walks, and when he returned, there was a brand new, specially built outdoor pen to receive him. And he in turn helped the cause. He would march in a parade for animals, carrying a banner with the name and address of the League; he would go on exhibition to raise money for his less fortunate brethren, and if it was announced that "Polaris the Glorious" was to be present at any gathering he would draw a bigger crowd than the Mayor of Worcester.

Once at a garden party given for the benefit

Mr. and Mrs. Baynes with Polaris and Heatherbloom

of the League, the great dog sat at a table beside Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Cooper, helping to sell photographs of himself, when a fine lady sailed by with an absurd brown poodle in her wake. Her prow was high in the air, and apparently she saw nothing of the earthly things about her until she came to anchor at the very next table. Polaris had been looking rather bored, but when the poodle hove in sight his interest in life returned with a jump. Mrs. Smith moved quickly to the lady and suggested that as she had a dog with her, she might prefer to sit at a table farther from the guest of honor. In the loftiest manner she raised her lorgnette and answered, "Don't be afraid; Péribo won't hurt him; my dog is perfectly harmless."

"Mine isn't," gasped the President of the League, but Polaris did the rest of the explaining, for he was over the table to see what brown poodles are made of. Mrs. Cooper was thrown to the ground, but with rare grit hung on to his chain, or that night Péribo would have gnawed a bone with his fathers. The lady quickly weighed anchor, and under full sail and auxiliary steam, and *preceded* by her

"tender," headed for the farthest corner of the garden.

After Polaris had been at the League for three or four months I sent for his bill. I never repeated the offense. The following note came in response to my request: "Bill? For *that* dog? There is no bill—there will never be any bill—for Polaris. It is a great honor to have him here, and moreover, he does more for the League than the League does for him. He is the grandest dog we have ever seen."

Almost always the star dog was "true to form," but there are a few instances in which his behavior has never been accounted for. It was while he was a guest of Mrs. Smith that the League changed its quarters, and during the excitement, he managed to take a holiday. Whether the catch of his new cage became loose, or whether he succeeded in lifting it, we shall never know, but he got out and ran away. Every one was so busy with the work incident to moving that he was not missed, and he was gone all day. There is nothing very surprising about this, but there is about the fact that in the late afternoon he came prancing back, escorted by

two strange male dogs—one a collie and the other of unknown nationality, all three looking and acting as if they were extremely well pleased with one another. Why in this instance he played with his companions instead of thrashing them is just as remarkable as that there was never any complaint of mischief done during this one day of absolute freedom.

A charming incident connected with his life in Worcester has to do with his visit to St. Mark's Church. He was with Mrs. Smith, so I shall let her tell it in the very words she wrote to me:

"I am reminded of a very beautiful day during Polaris's stay at the League. It was Humane Sunday of the year he was with us, and I was asked to take him to St. Mark's Sunday school for the service. There was a little talk on kindness to animals, and the story of Polaris was told, with a sketch of the life of his unfortunate brother, Rescued, by way of contrast. Then I took Polaris to the front of the church, for the service was in the church itself, but stopped at the foot of the chancel, rather hesitating to go up into the chancel with him, even though the children could not see him very well where we stood. But Mr. Blodgett, the fine-minded rector of the church, said: 'Why don't you take him up in

the chancel, so that the children can see him? He is God's creature as much as we; take him into the chancel.' And really, Mr. Baynes, though you doubtless have many lovely pictures of the dog, I think I have the best one of all, for could there be anything more beautiful than that glorious creature, in God's house, standing against a background of altar and stained glass windows, and surrounded by little children? My eyes were wet, I remember, and I was not alone in that."

Doubtless my own eyes, too, would have been wet if I had seen him, but I'm afraid I should have been laughing through my tears, for the combination of Polaris and stained glass would have been too much for my sense of humor.

While the dog was still at the League, I went to New York to lecture to the blind. The lecture was to be on animals, and was to be given in one of the large museums. In order that the members of my audience might have a reasonable idea of the forms of the animals I was to talk about, it was arranged that mounted specimens should be brought into the great rotunda of the building where the guests might come before the address and examine them with their hands.

Two or three days before the lecture I went to the museum, and after feeling the hard, dry, unyielding specimens, I decided that we could have something more interesting. I would bring into my talk the story of Peary's Eskimo dogs, and Polaris should come and serve as a living illustration. So I telegraphed to the Worcester Animal Rescue League, asking that the dog be crated and sent to me at the museum. Presently I got an answer to the effect that Polaris didn't like crates, but that the President of the League would accompany him to New York, wait for him, and take him back to Worcester.

I went to the Grand Central Station to meet them. The journey had not been "without incident." It appeared that when Polaris was put aboard the train there was a white bulldog in the car, and the two were chained very near together. The only barrier between them was a coffin, and Mrs. Smith earnestly requested the baggage man to chain them farther apart, for reasons which should have been obvious. It has been my experience that most railroad men are courteous and willing to take reasonable suggestions. But this man was very young and an-

swered that he "knew his business." "You may do that," replied Mrs. Smith, "but you don't know my dog." As there was no response, she walked away, hoping that the strange surroundings and unusual noises would so occupy the attention of the dogs that they would forget to fight.

Half an hour later she went to the baggage car again. In one corner stalked Polaris, at the end of his chain, mane erect and glaring at the bulldog who now lay in the farthest corner, more than willing for another round, but in the meantime philosophically licking his wounds. In the center of the car a young baggage man, who "knew his business" even better than he did an hour before, was energetically scrubbing the top of a coffin case.

That night at the museum Polaris looked his very best. He had been given a bath to wash away the stains of travel, and, clad in his immaculate robes of state, the King of Dogs stood on a dais in the center of the great rotunda to receive his guests. And they came, hundreds of them, to admire him and to do him homage. For nearly an hour they filed past, each in turn

stopping to pat the broad head, to feel the long shining hair, and the well-muscled body beneath it, and in some cases to receive a caress from the clean velvet tongue. One woman, with her arm about his neck, laughingly exclaimed: "I feel as if I had been kissed by an Eskimo."

And all the time Polaris smiled and gayly waved his tail, the most cordial of hosts. Then there was a misunderstanding. A blind man accidentally gave the dog a hard thrust in the ribs with a stick. It must have hurt him severely, but so joyous was the occasion that even then he glanced up with a smile, as much as to say, "You didn't mean that, old chap, did you?" But the eyes which met his were sightless; they were not softened by regret or warm with understanding. He saw the stick, he felt the pain. A thousand years fell away like a curtain, and he was back with his ancestors in the Arctic fighting for his life. I saw his great wolf teeth flash bare, and he leaped straight at the blind man's throat. But quick as the change had been, I had seen the first shadow of it, leaped before he did, and his jaws closed on my hands instead of the mark he had aimed for. I held him fast and

tried to calm him, but I could do nothing with him. All the Greenland devils which had been slumbering in his heart sprang wide awake at

A Living Statue

the "insult" he had received—an insult without an apology. I led him away, put a muzzle on him, and brought him back. He growled savagely and fought to get away from me, and I was obliged to take him to an empty room and

chain him up. There he lay, like a wild beast in a trap, following with suspicious eyes every movement which went on around him. After my lecture I locked him up, hung a placard on the door warning people not to go near him, and left him for the night.

What worried me most, when the immediate danger was over, was the thought that his disposition had been permanently ruined. I felt as one might feel when a friend suddenly goes insane. You can imagine my delight then, when I entered the room next morning, to have Polaris rise to greet me with his very own smile and the well-known wag of his tail. His madness had been only temporary. I took him in a taxi to the Grand Central Station and turned him over to Mrs. Smith, who escorted him back to Worcester.

Next spring I was lecturing in Lexington, Kentucky, when I received a telegram from my secretary stating that Dr. Grenfell was ready for Polaris, but that the Worcester Animal Rescue League refused to turn him over without positive orders from me. I understood the situation better next day when I got a letter from the

Superintendent begging me not to take the dog away. Every one at the League—every one who had met him—was in love with him, and the

Singing Wild Sagas of the North

thought of parting with him was almost unbearable. But what could I do? I had given my word to Dr. Grenfell, and duty called the star dog back to the North. Reluctantly I telegraphed to his loyal friends that they must bid

him good-by, and console themselves with the thought that the perfect care they had given him for nearly half a year had kept him fit for the work ahead of him.

So it was that he joined Dr. Grenfell and sailed away from his thousands of friends and the comforts of civilization, to a strange life of hardship amid the snow and the ice and the bitter winds of the Labrador, that he might live up to the traditions of his forbears, throw his broad chest into the harness, and work with a great man for a great cause.

And here we will take leave of Polaris the Glorious, with the words of Mr. C. L. Gilman to another gallant sledge dog:

"When you might have copped the ribbon you have worn the harness collar,
Pulling thrice your weight through brush and slush and bog.
Sure, you might have been a 'champion,' without value save the dollar,
But the Red Gods made you priceless—
YOU'RE A DOG!"

55

(1st edition)